

# GRACIA:

A SOCIAL TRAGEDY.   
FRANK EVERETT PLUMMER.



"A broken lily, drooping on the stem."

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"My happy  
childhood."



"Oh, angel aim and  
angel grace of youth"

# GRACIA

A SOCIAL TRAGEDY

BY

FRANK EVERETT PLUMMER

ILLUSTRATIONS DESIGNED BY THE AUTHOR

FRANK WOLCOT WEBSTER, ARTIST



CHICAGO

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## PROLOGUE.

“What the poet writes,  
He writes. Mankind accepts it if it suits,  
And that’s success; if not, the poem’s passed  
From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand  
Until the unborn snatch it, crying out  
In pity on their fathers’ being so dull,  
And that’s success, too.”

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.



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*"Oh, how can I recount my wicked life?"*





## Gracia: A Social Tragedy.

"So here's the tale from beginning to end, my friend."

—*Browning.*

### I

SWEET sister, you have lived a holy life,  
A life devoted to angelic deeds,—  
The hallowed sanction of your God is yours—  
Unselfish, and unspotted from the world;  
Your soul is placid as a mountain lake,  
Where white swans bathe their plumage; your fair  
life,  
One lingering summer day, unmarred by cloud  
Or storm. How your pure heart will chill to feel  
The grief and utter woe I now relate!  
Oh, how can I recount my wicked life  
To you, or show the fabric woven here  
Upon the loom of time—its warp and woof  
Compact of weakness, woefulness, and crime:—  
Illumined once with love, then darkened, save  
For lurid light of hate and wild revenge?

But set the screen before the candle that  
Its light fall not upon my shrinking face.  
Pay strictest heed, for I would have you tell  
This tale in such strong, turgid phrase that some  
Young soul may haply heed and be restrained  
From entering on sure ruin's dreadful road;  
Speak burning words that may arrest the ear,  
Enchain the thought, and lead weak steps aright.

And should but one young spirit list, and heed,  
And thus avoid my awful course, and gain  
The strength that will endure when trial comes,—  
For this I'll lift the curtain from my past,  
And show the ugly wreck strewn by the way!

## II

I SHUDDER, and grow sick with wan despair,  
When with reluctant steps, life's pathway o'er,  
At memory's beck, I tread. The forms recalled,  
The tones of love, my mother's sad, pale face,  
My father's curse, my sins and tragedies,—  
These make the shadows black as night and death;  
Nay, tear away the remnant of that hope  
Which ever bade me gaze up toward the skies  
To greet the morning star.

Oh, heed my cry,  
You who have heard so many tales of woe,  
And ope your heart in pity for my lot—  
Condemned to this cold prison cell for life.

But let me first the happy part relate—  
My early life and home and youthful joys,  
My sinless self ere doomed by blighting curse—  
As it reveals itself to me at night

When Sleep, the merciful, envelops all  
In mantle of forgetfulness; nay, wafts  
Me back to childhood, and to childhood's ways  
Of purest innocence,—brief respite from  
My weight of woe.

Would God that healing sleep  
Might ceaseless prove; for in its dreams I live  
And love my happy girlhood o'er again.

And oft I dream:—

I seem to be in some  
Vast deep—aye, more, an awful, lower deep—  
From whence is no escape—entombed, to dwell  
Perpetually in darkness and despair!—  
But e'en as flowers, when trampled to the earth,  
Lift up to heaven their crushed and drooping heads,  
So upward turns my gaze; when lo! there bursts  
Upon my startled sense a vision fair:—  
I see my home—the home where I was born  
And grew to womanhood—far floating like  
Enchanted cloud athwart the sky astray.  
I see the orchard, where the birds burst forth  
In song, and buds unfold to fullest bloom;  
I see the porch, vine-covered; and tall trees  
Whose branches wave a greeting to the sky;  
Huge granite crags, whose battered, beetling brows  
Are draped with tangled mass of foliage

Like ivy 'broidery on castle walls;  
Secluded lakes, whose waters, crystal-clear,  
Are margined with a fringe of grass and reeds.  
The brook still murmurs 'neath its tangled banks  
Where blushing berries ripen in the sun;  
Afar, and all around, stretch grass or grain  
That waves, and runs like billows on the sea;—  
And, like the shores that stay the sea's advance,  
Low foot-hills and high-lifting mountains bid  
The rolling prairies cease their onward sweep.  
Both Love and Peace smile benedictions there!  
The scene is near akin to heaven's hope—  
The meadowland of fair futurity.

A little girl plays there upon the lawn—  
Then goes to school, and learns to con the books;  
To touch the canvas with a magic brush;  
To voice the melody of woodland birds.  
She makes acquaintance with the printed page  
Where lie the wisdom-breeding thoughts of men  
Long dead, but greater than their progeny.  
Thus were the fleeting days of childhood spent;—  
The bud became the flower of womanhood.  
She early learns love-lessons from a youth  
Whose after-life, though cursed by her misstep,  
Proves true and noble—worthiest Knight of all!  
So childhood's joys and griefs pass with the  
    days.

A tender father listens for her step :  
He lifts her to his knee, and, talking, molds  
His thought to suit her young years' innocence.  
He lists to questions deeper than they seem ;  
But offers little warning of the thorns  
In life's long path, and sounds no note save love.  
'Twere better he had taught this trusting soul  
Distrust ; had taught to know, thus to avoid,  
The bitter truths life's troubles hold in store !

The mother takes the child and smoothes her hair  
And straightens out her dress and kisses her,  
And with a smile dismisses her to play ;  
With warning word restrains the restless feet,  
And breathes a blessing on the heedless head.

O tender mother-face ! A Raphael  
Might envy it. To paint it, painter must  
Have dipped his pencil in the fount of light :  
The sculptor who would fix that face in stone  
Would need the chisel that had carved the Christ.

. . . . .  
My heart yearns upward to that Paradise ;—  
A Paradise whose gates seem closed to me.

. . . . .  
How fair that sacred scene ! It seems to my  
Poor heart and weary mind like mellow shine  
Of after-glow from sun but lately set ;

Or like delightful peace as is ascribed  
To famed Elysian fields—a lotus-land  
Where Sorrow never comes!

Thus peacefully

The happy years speed on. The girl that was,  
Is woman now and fair. With graceful step  
She moves about, as moves a stately queen,  
And wears a lily wreath without a stain.  
A star-beam is not purer than her life.  
Respect, Esteem, and Love walk with her there  
Through all the happy days; and Reverence  
Comes oft to lay his hand upon her head:—  
Such matchless majesty has innocence;  
Such priceless crowning and fine blamelessness.

What flawless gem—a life devoid of wrong!  
Like hue of lily, dew at dawn, or light  
Of angel face, that life was wholly fair.

O childhood years! Sweet infancy, fair heaven,  
Ye surely are akin! These thoughts awake  
Pure dreams which I had deemed as dead! Yet who  
Forgets the days of youth's light-heartedness,—  
That halcyon time when we were wont to tread  
Untried, enchanted ways? How fair and bright  
The future seemed when Hope was young—when all  
The world was new! Alas, the joys of youth

Evanish like the gleams of Northern lights!  
This vision fades as in the storm-swept sky  
A rainbow dims and dies, yet soothing night  
Brings it again to charm, until the pale,  
Cold light of morning, colorless, reveals  
My dreary cell; reveals the blackened page—  
That blighting curse that drags my soul to hell!

There is a hell, if but remembrances  
Of base, unworthy, and unholy deeds!

. . . . .

Why am I here? With earnest, prayerful heart,  
But gaze you on the picture of my life—  
A sad-red lurid glare of sin and shame,  
A living proof that e'en the angels fell;—  
Then pray your God no other ever feel  
Or know the curse of blighted hopes thrust thus  
Upon my soul! 'Tis true, I sinned, we erred;  
Or is it sin to err—sin to give way  
Where nature is too weak to stand the strain?  
How can a thing be other than itself—  
A bow be stronger than its timber's strength?  
But still my heart holds dear an image—aye,  
'Tis heaven's own!—a tie that binds me yet  
To him, to earth, and heaven's high estate.  
And while I ope my heart to you, oh, pray  
That your dear God will let me rest, at least,



Beside the gates of Paradise e'en though  
The barrier intervenes eternally!  
'Twere heaven enough to feel him near; to know  
He holds the precious fruitage of our sin  
Toward me with eager, outstretched, loving arms!

List on, and you shall all my sorrows know.

## III

I WISHED for naught that love and money could  
Provide. An only child, my every whim  
Was heeded. Fortune smiled on mine and me.  
Wide o'er the windy stretches of the West  
My father's cattle herds were wont to graze.  
'Twas these, and mines, and lumber lands that  
formed  
His source of plenteous wealth. What wonder then  
That my intense desire for classic lore,  
Fine arts, and music's melting subtleties,  
Should be most generously gratified,  
E'en though our home was far removed from those  
Great centers of refinement and advance?  
With riches one o'er-rides opposing fronts.

No nymph or satyr, faun or siren fair,  
Or Celtic elf, or troll of far North-land,  
Inhabited the hills and wood-grounds near  
Our home. No need of sprites or spirits vague

Of olden time or other lands to hold  
High carnival or council wise, by stream  
Or ledged height of my far Western home.  
No need of ancient myth to add a charm  
To that romantic spot. The whole bright land  
Was full of life and light. The very sky,  
Sun-filled and sapphire-blue, seemed constantly,  
Like wood and stream, to harbor life; and clouds  
Would hang so white and motionless above  
The towering peaks, we thought them angels sent  
To join us in our happy wanderings!  
How daintily was gray of dawn transformed!  
How gloriously the floods of midday light  
Bronzed, bright and new, the wrinkled face of  
Earth!

How stealthily the light at sunset-time  
Crept up the distant hills, and in its wake  
Left soft but deepening shadows that o'erflowed  
Both hill and dale, and soothed the land to sleep!  
What charm of silences enchants the house,  
Relieved by song of bird and whispering rill!  
What wild, tumultuous boom of maddened brook!  
The scream of eagle blent with thunder's crash,—  
As, strong on noble pinions, swift he winged  
His airy flight among the lofty crags,  
In battle thus with wet and wind of storm  
In suddenness let loose,—still lingers bright  
In memory, and stirs my sluggish thoughts!

Oh, those were gladsome, glorious scenes, and there  
I lived enshrined in Nature's inner heart!

No spot was more a hunters' Paradise;  
For game ran wild upon the wooded hills,  
Or shelter sought in mountain fastness deep.  
The whirring pheasant and the rabbit shy,  
The deer and bear and game of wilder mood,  
Afforded sportsmen ample scope to test  
Their skill or courage; whilst in clear, cold streams  
Elusive fish would swim, disport, and thrive,  
To challenge anglers' art.

In Autumn time

Would hunters come, and shoot and trap and snare;  
Nor did they care how innocent the life,  
Or how destructive;—panther, fierce and wild,  
Or wide-eyed, pleading fawn;—they slaughtered all!

## IV

ONE day two woodsmen, carrying a man  
Upon a litter made from leafy boughs,  
Emerged with toilsome, careful steps from out  
The canyon's rocky hold, and sought our home  
For help for him they bore. They said: "This man  
Is hurt; we found him in the woods beside  
A dying stag. Wilt house him here and nurse?  
He may recover yet."

They brought him in,  
And bathed the cruel, lacerated wounds,  
And stopped their bleeding mouths; for he had  
poured  
His life-blood out like water on the ground,  
In battle fierce with forest's antlered king.

Long, long he lay within the fever's grasp.  
Days into weeks had crept; weeks changed to  
months,

And still the shadow, Death, above his couch,  
Hunggrily hovered, yet withheld the dart.

Far better he had died,—forgive my mood;—  
Far better I had died whilst yet a babe  
In mother-arms than e'er we twain had met!

Though shy at first, I soon came with the rest,  
And took my place beside his couch to watch,  
And give the cooling drinks and opiates.  
Above a snow-white brow, curled raven locks;  
His dark eyes, glowing with the fever's fire,  
Made startling contrast with his hueless cheeks.  
I knew, when health and strength returned,  
The man would be Adonis-like in look,  
As he was hero-like in form.

Oh, that

I might have seen the baser metal hid  
Beneath that polished front;—have known the dross  
Concealed from human eyes!

Health did return:

The fever slowly cooled; the pulses calmed;  
The sense ceased wandering; the vacant mind  
Gave place to wakened soul. Death fled from him,  
And left my future curse—my fall, my woe;  
O God, what dreadful, awful heritage!

## V

HIS nurse in sickness, I became his guide  
In health. We hunted, fished, and read by  
turns.

His days of convalescence in the fields  
And wood we passed. In dulcet tones he talked  
Of life beyond the limits of my hills;  
Of city people and their pleasures gay;  
And charmed with richest web of wonder-words,  
My fancies. Then my home and rural ways  
Grew dull and wearisome, and lost their charm.  
At his approach my heart would hush, intense  
As is the hush that ushers in the dawn.  
His easy ways, his fascinating speech,  
His manly look, were wizard spells to me.  
His very thought would speed my pulse. His touch  
Stirred, thrilled me with a captivating joy—  
O'erwhelmed me with love's finest tenderness.  
The rose and lily on my cheek would pale  
Or flame in unison with voice and tone.

His love was as the warmth of tropic climes.  
The sweet imprisonment of his embrace  
Would set my pulses wild as storm-flung spray,  
Transfiguring my dormant soul to glad  
And vibrant music—liquid music like  
The mellow trill of gleeful meadow lark.  
What dormant worlds of rapture were aroused!  
Glad heaven itself seemed opened to us twain!  
My blood was liquid fire, so fierce it surged.  
I trembled with an inward thrill of bliss,—  
A bliss more wondrous, wanton-blind than love.  
The sensuous glow of warm delight so filled  
My being that my very soul grew faint.  
What fatal mastery had his warm caress!  
How strong is love's delirium! My hopes,  
My plans, my dreams, my thoughts, myself,—all, all  
Were now absorbed in him. The river met  
The sea.

Why tell you what he said? The sons  
Of God to Eve's fair daughters told the tale  
In infancy of Time; and sons of men  
Have learned it but too well.

How tenderly  
He forged the links of love's bright, golden chain  
About me! His magnetic glances, sweet  
And winning words of adulation, soft,  
Warm kisses welling from his inner soul,



My trusting heart to passionate response  
Aroused,—enwrapped me in love's silken mesh,—  
Until, all powerless, enraptured, I  
Gave eager listening to his loving words,  
And to the music of his soft appeals.  
My true affection strengthened into love,  
And earnest love became fierce passion's flame  
Unconsciously and uncontrollably,  
As holy thought becomes absorbing prayer.  
If love is holy, then the question holds—  
“Where, then, is blame? Where, where the wicked-  
ness?”

The sculptor spake, and Galatea burst  
Her marble thralls; the stony statue changed  
To life—a woman fair, and all aglow  
With passion's warmth! Transfigured, thus, was I,  
My ravished senses thrilled with ecstasy!  
My cup of happiness was as complete  
As wine-glass brimmed with nectared essence that  
Exudes from ripened, luscious fruit of grape.  
Pearl-like and opal-pure, the bending sky  
Appeared. Ineffable delight that then  
Was mine! I thought, nay, knew, in heaven I  
dwelt;—

For oh, what matchless rapture is there like  
The pain of loving and of being loved?  
Alas! To misjudge self is but the dark,

Prophetic shadow of vast, hastening woe;—  
To misjudge others,—listen—you may learn!

Dost know, my sister, that much happiness  
But blinds, as sun at full of noon? Dost know  
That sorrows dull the glass of life until  
Effulgent truth may be descried and known?  
This seeming paradox applies to all  
Of good and evil. Guilt is armored well  
And fortified, and ready for the charge;  
Whilst Virtue's very innocence invites  
Attack, and knows not how to save till lost!  
And so all noble attributes of life  
Fall prey to evil ones, as men of good  
Intent become the dupes of those whose base,  
Designing minds lead them to take undue  
Advantage. Selfishness doth rule supreme,  
And Discontent prevails where Peace should reign!

. . . . .  
But one brief year had sped since first he came.  
Again the purpling leaf and rod of gold  
Shed splendor o'er the hills. Within the vales,  
Late summer lingered, whilst soft, misty blues  
Spread gently like a creeping mystery,  
Above the fading forest, faint and far.

Mid-afternoon, one languid, trance-like day,  
Found us among the hills with rod and gun.

Yet pleasures of the chase but wearied soon,  
So all-absorbingly our love had grown  
And paramount, belittling all things else.  
Oh, joyous days of blissful idleness!

. . . . .  
There was a cave close by, within a high  
And rocky cliff, once occupied and held  
By lawless men who plundered far and wide,  
And hid their booty there, tradition taught;  
Till, once, emboldened by the terror which  
Prevailed through all that country wide, they stole  
A maid and would have crowned her bandit queen  
But that the settlers, stirred to fury, rose  
And captured them and freed the maid, and drave  
The terror from that wild, romantic spot.

We often rested there on summer eves,  
When he would weave from fragrant wild-wood  
flowers  
Bright wreaths with which to crown my youthful  
brow;  
Then, kneeling there before my mossy throne,  
With eyes which spoke the love he bore for me,  
Would call me "Sweet Titania," his "Queen,"  
And vow to be my lover evermore.

## VI

ONE dreamy day, through odorous forests old,  
Without intent or purpose, leisurely  
And free, we wandered to that hidden cave,  
And in the cooling shadows tarried long.  
And there, beside a bank of wilting flowers  
Which we had plucked in many a lonely dell,  
Whose dying fragrance, lotus-like, dulled all  
The brain and sense, I gave myself to him—  
My one, strong, wooing lover whom I loved!  
And, as the helpless moth in circling round  
The ever-brilliant flame which draws it on,  
Finds but too late the death which lurks within  
The lode-star of its headlong, maddening flight,—  
So I, who loved this being of my thoughts,  
This fair conception of my girlhood dreams,—  
Kept swaying, rushing onward, in my flight  
Until, my senses dulled by maddening bliss,  
My maidenly reserve thrown to the winds,—  
Consuming fires of passion closed me round

And held me fast, a plaything in its power.  
Thus, self-forgot, aye, all-forgot, I fell!

There came a storm that wept the whole night  
through,  
And wrestled, ghost-like, with the swaying trees:  
But I was happy! Why should I believe  
The falling drops were heaven's grief-wrung  
tears?

I think now of the cloud and storm that night,  
As Nature's pitying rebuke; I think  
The wind, by sorrow moved, wailed woe; I think  
The drops that fell incessantly came from  
Sad, weeping eyes beyond the clouds, and were  
Not rain, but tears—tears wept for me.

Oh, wild,  
Delirious after-days; ideal days  
When Love brought joy, and proffered all his  
sweets!  
Ah, days so full of tremulous delights!  
Such love as Psyche of all mortals found  
When Zephyr bore her far to Eros' realm—  
The God of Love, her lover evermore,—  
I felt for my fond lover, warm and bold:  
Such amorous rapture and sweet ravishment!  
Impassioned dream! 'Tis pity 'twould not stay!  
Ah, nothing stays but sorrow and despair!

No woman e'er was happier than I.  
Parisian ladies, whirling mazy waltz,  
Close-clasped in their fond lovers' 'circling arms;  
Venetian daughters, drifting aimlessly  
In graceful gondolas, the while their proud  
Attendants breathe to them sweet words of love;  
America's fair maidens, happiest yet  
Of all the earth, with gallant sweethearts true,  
When Luna shines her fullest, strolling through  
Lone country ways perfumed by new-cut grain;—  
The joy of none of these could equal mine,  
When deep in mossy dells of evergreen  
Fir-forests we would wander onward, lured  
And lulled to sweet contentment by the breeze,  
The forest fragrance, and the cooling shade.  
Exceeding glory of delight, entranced!  
Oh, happiness beyond horizon's bound!  
Sweet happiness—and I, poor foolish child,  
In pacifying ignorance, believed  
'Twould be eternal!

Thus do all men err!

Let no one wholly lose himself in love.  
'Tis but a means to a superior end,  
Which, overfeeding, palls the eager taste.  
The unchecked flame consumes the lavish soul,  
As fiercest sun the brooklet's liquid heart;  
And that which gently used had furnished life

With food whereby to hope, and nourished soul,  
And kept the heart green all the journey through,  
Is wasted for the joyance of an hour!

. . . . .

*The sweets of love resemble much  
The jasmine's flowers of gold,—  
In roots of both a poison lurks,  
That few scarce deem they hold.*

## VII

AT times a vague, uncertain sense of ill,  
Or dread of something unforeseen, but sure  
And terrible, would shake my shrinking soul  
With fear of change, as if a rose should feel  
The canker gnawing its once happy heart.  
Thus phantom-shapes of doubts and fears would  
haunt  
And fret my life; they drove me almost mad.  
Though frightful these, at his soft-whispered word,  
I could forget;—such was my love for him.

I might have known that love when it attains  
Such heights of bliss as mine, has naught beyond  
To seek; and seeking naught, as all things else  
That's ceased to grow, begins its certain death!  
'Tis Nature's method. Oh, the pathos, pain,  
And imperfection of all perfectness!

Too soon, alas! these dim forebodings shaped  
Themselves to grim reality. One morn



He did not come to share the early meal;  
Yet this alarmed me not, for oft he rose  
At dawn's first hint, and with his dog and gun  
Roamed o'er the hills; but not that day, nor next,  
Nor ever in the after-following days  
Came he again!

'Twas then I knew the truth  
So lately feared,—he had deserted me!  
Gone wholly out from my glad life, like soul  
Gone quickly from its tenement of clay.  
My heart, from its far heights of lifting bliss,  
Dropped dead like winging bird when lightning  
riven.

With woe unspeakable, that thought took form.  
Fierce waged the tumult of my brain and heart.  
There ever then was with me that which made  
My peace unrest; my joy, deep discontent.  
Thus came the night to my love's blissful day!

. . . . .  
*Nor homed nor hallowed in the heavens beyond  
Is there intenser joy than one's first love;  
While hell itself contains no sadder thing  
Than blighted love, when turned to woman's shame!*

## VIII

**M**Y mother soon knew all. I did not try  
To hide the sin-fraught truth from her. Nor  
did

She chide, rebuke, or speak reprovingly;  
But wept with white, drawn face, and breaking heart:  
My sin had torn its ruthless, ragged way  
Straight to that ceaseless fount of godlike love.

I think the saddest tears that ever fall  
From human eyes upon this tear-drenched earth  
Are those by mothers shed for ruined girls.

Weep, mother, weep; in sorrow dost thou eat  
The bitter fruit of thine own carelessness!  
Couldst thou not see the signs of growing love?  
Didst thou not know that inexperienced youth  
Confides, believes, and has no will to hold  
Life's battlements against a wily foe?  
Why didst thou, mother, not protect thy child?  
And thou, O father, where wert thou the while



*"But wept with white-drawn face and breaking heart."*



Thy child was tutored in life's mysteries  
By one unknown save by his polished mien?  
Why did ye give such license to thy child?  
Weep, parents, weep; for ye are much to blame:  
Thy child the victim of thy heedlessness.  
So might I say, and saying, speak but truth.  
Yet God forbid! 'Twas fault of mine alone!  
I'll call it mine, for who can judge himself?  
'Twas I who caused my mother thus to drink  
Of sorrow's utmost dregs! 'Twas I who thrust  
The iron through that soul whose fountain pure  
Had nourished and sustained me all my years;  
Thus did my guilt become a cruel shaft  
Which caused the blotting out of that fair life,—  
A life that Earth nor Time can e'er restore.

Oh, bitter, poisoned cup! Ah, fatal draught!  
For soon she died! Love's magic fingers touched  
Her face, and brought the old smile back again;—  
Death froze it there eternally.

Then rose  
My stern and angry father from beside  
My mother's bier, and turned on me a glance  
Of wrathful lightning. I could seem to see  
The long ancestral line, whose name he bore  
Without dishonor and without a stain,  
Rise from their graves to point at me as one

Who first brought shame upon their noble house.  
How wrong can e'en a father be! His child  
Betrayed, he should have closer clasped and held,  
Until just God bade both to rise, and take  
An honored seat beside His radiant throne:  
For who will help one if a parent fail?  
Through human means, God works: it may be just.  
Outside of home there is no pity, none!  
Society, thy laws are tyranny,—  
More cruel than was Draco's bloody code!

He cursed me then, and bade me never seek  
For aid from him, nor see him evermore.  
Oh, such a curse! It surely must have sent  
A shiver through the universe of God.  
It fell on me as falls the rude north wind  
On fragile flower; or as the blighting frosts  
Of winter, on the tender heart of May.  
My father, in impatient rage, seemed now  
As wild as Afghaun's Demon of the Waste!

## IX

**D**ISOWNED, forsaken, through the night I fled,  
Ne'er to return, or cross that threshold more.  
In pain and tears my burden thence I bore—  
The burden of my grief and sin and shame!  
Since then, no day has dawned but brought  
despair;  
No night has come without its conscious woe.

How sad to leave a home for any cause!  
'Tis doubly so to leave for cause like mine.  
How dear seemed each familiar spot,—all, all  
To vanish from my life, as fades a rare  
And pleasing dream! For now my cherished home  
Grew dearer than before, just as a joy  
Withheld, increases fond desire. Aye, now  
My mother's gentle face, her tender love,  
Her angel bosom where my girlhood's griefs  
Found rest; the hills, and rivulets, and wastes;  
With over all fair heaven's wide arch of blue;

Bound my young heart with bonds so strong that  
Time,  
Nor Life, nor Death could sunder even one.  
How strange it is that few do fully sense  
The matchless worth and beauty home contains,  
Until that birthright they have forfeited!  
'Twas then my woe impressed me with its weight!  
Oh, home, my home, I see it as I speak.  
How soft and warmly bright the lamp-light shone!  
What contrast to the gloom that hems my way,  
As, exiled now, I wander forth in strange  
And Stygian darkness of the night and world!

There is no beauty like the dying day,  
When cloud-filled, lowering sky is all aflame  
With gorgeous rays of sinking, blood-red sun;—  
No pall so dense as when the sun dies down,  
And leaves great banks of blackened mists  
Upon the bosom of on-coming night.

Aye, life is like a golden morn, soon changed  
To gloomy night; or like a tender smile,  
Effaced by floods of bitter, grief-wrung tears.

. . . . .  
I found a home with lowly country folk,  
Who took me in, and shared their bread with me.  
Their words were few, yet they were kind and good,  
And full of frank and homely ministry.



---

I needed help. The storm that rudely broke  
Upon my head had left me only my  
Pale life,—my listless, homeless, loveless life,—  
Save my fond, boyish lover, who, through all  
My woe and misery, had proved that oft  
A true-born nature covers gold with dross;  
That, hidden from our sight, are jewels rich  
Whose beauty is revealed but by the grind  
And wear caught from the world's mad, jostling  
rush.

My life seemed widely out of tune like some  
Neglected harp whose sweet-toned strings were  
snapped,  
Or wholly gone,—sad fragment of what was.

## X

I HAD a hope, indeed, that soon a life  
Potentially existent would appear,  
To cheer and light me on my dreary way,  
To comfort and console. Within my heart  
There now upsprung a well of water sweet,  
That made my desert-life seem new again;—  
Methought that gladly would I enter Death's  
Drear vale of woe and anguish, could I win  
And wear the sacred crown of motherhood.

So passed the days. And did my early prayers  
Avail at last? Did God remember me?  
In the great scales of Justice Provident  
Would my youth's exemplary life outweigh  
The woman's one mistake, and leave me hope  
And love? 'Twere much to hope, and yet I clung  
To it as clings the sailor to the spar  
When yawning Deep's cry loud for sacrifice.

My babe's first cry awoke the mother-love.  
The tiny thing was sweet,—a blossom blown

Upon my breast,—it scented all my hopes!  
Life now meant all; to me the stars came out  
Like sparkling diamonds sown along the sky;  
The breezes blew as soft as zephyr's breath  
In Paradise; earth took the hue of spring;  
With fervent praise, 'mid buds and fragrant boughs,  
Birds sang as they were wont in sky and wood,—  
Sang songs of such pervading sweetness as  
Would soothe the soul to perfect, dreamful rest;—  
Fate's bitter cup was sweetened by my babe.

O mother-love! One fount unpoisoned yet!  
Conventionality, which deadens all  
It touches into artificial fraud,  
May thrust the woman out, but can not frame  
The laws for mothers' hearts. I loved my child,  
An outcast though I was, and it my shame.  
No shame, indeed, where God shall be the judge;  
No shame, for Jesus, the Immaculate,  
Was brother to my babe so far as man  
Might know, if human tests must stand and be  
Criterion of sacred truth. Are love  
And confidence such baleful sin and crime?  
Is motherhood not honorable? Is there  
Condition that can make of it a wrong?  
Oh, say it not, but stand for God and right;  
Defend the truth; ignore the social guild;  
Contemn all laws that nature contravene;

Bring all to harmonize with God's decrees;  
Oh, make it good for children to be born;  
Give royal welcome to the little ones;—  
Christ loved them; are ye better, then, than He?  
Let Magi bring to her their offerings,  
A daughter of the gods is born! Her star  
Illuminates the sky,—so should men say

But love of babe betrays me into speech  
That multitudes will hold as far from truth.

I can not well relate to you how much  
I clave to her. My poor and lonely heart  
Was bathed—baptized within the rosy flow  
Of that strong flood of love, which like a tide  
Hides rocks and weeds upon the rugged beach  
And splendors it to beauty. Then at times  
I lifted up my face and smiled to God,  
Although He had forgotten me, it seemed,  
In my distress—so glad was I for this, His gift,  
This bud of His, close-grafted on my heart.

I watched the child with mother-loving eyes  
That noted every change. She grew and throve  
Apace; and at some trick of voice or hand—  
Mothers use such, and angels, too, I think—  
Would, laughing, coo and leap up as to fly.  
Her arms, like clinging necklaces of pearl,



*"I watched the child with mother-loving eyes."*



Clasped me around with living bands designed  
To guard, and bind me to eternal good.  
O sister, none but mothers know the sweet,  
Contented love that fills the heart when one's  
Own babe with quiet yet responsive life  
Is clinging gently to the willing breast!

## XI

THEN came a change—a rude and cruel change.  
A blighting hand was over all. The babe

I loved, nay, worshiped, thinner grew and  
pale,

And pined away. I watched her ang<sup>le</sup> face,  
And saw the rose of health desert her cheek.

O mother-love, would thou hadst power enough  
To rend the heavens and slay the dragon, Death!

I could have borne the loss of home; my own  
Heart's keen remorse; the finger of proud scorn;  
Abandonment of friends;—I might have lived  
Without the love of him whose faithlessness  
Was my life's woeful blight, could I have kept  
The little life which heaven had granted me;—  
Which Fate, in wicked disregard, denied.

I sang soft melodies to soothe my child;  
For I loved song, and often wove my moods



Into sweet rhymes, and wedded them to tunes:—  
'Tis wish and wail form warp and weft of song.

*O Bud, unfold,  
And yield your fragrance to the wooing air;  
The ardent sun will kiss your petals fair;—  
Unfold, unfold.*

*O nestling Bird,  
The summer breezes wait your untried wing;  
The trees in silence list to hear you sing;—  
Die not unheard.*

*O Hope, so fair,  
Like rosy dawn that brings the wished-for day,  
Hide not behind the clouds; fade not away,  
And leave despair.*

Fate might have spared my babe;—it was to me  
As rain to thirsty earth, as sunlight is  
To life, or bird-song in the winter. But  
She faded as a flower. Soon her small face  
Grew pinched and pale; the little hands, sweet  
hands

That used to move in such a tender way,—  
In such caressing search about my face  
And neck,—now vaguely clutched the air in weak  
And fevered fretfulness; the dimpled limbs

Grew pitifully shrunken and reduced;  
The recognizing light now fled from her  
Young eyes. Then on the darkest, saddest day,—  
The dreariest of all the wearisome  
And heavy-laden days,—my baby died!  
And this, the last blow, fell with crushing force.  
I say the last!—Blows manifold were yet in store,  
Indeed, but what was left for blows to strike!

Ah, think of me, kind sister, as I held  
Her to my aching heart, and watched the cold,  
Gray pallor steal o'er her dear face, and felt  
The little body stiffen! Oh, what fierce  
And blighting anguish! Frenzied by a sense  
Of loss, I sought to kiss to life my child!  
It seemed I must succeed. Again and yet  
Again I kissed those death-cold lips;—I kissed  
Those parted, passive lips. O God, what cold,  
Bewildering fear was mine when met with no  
Response! When forced to feel the soul had fled—  
Forever fled,—naught left but clammy clay!  
Think you, could there be other grief so deep  
As this great one of mine? another heart  
So crushed, so broken, and so dead as this  
Poor heart now turned to hard, unfeeling stone?  
Dark, now, grew life. Perhaps you may have seen  
The cold, eclipsing moon obscure the face  
Of blazing sun, and nightfall drape the noon:

That only blots some fraction of one day;  
This blotted out the sun for me, and hung  
The cheerless midnight round me evermore.

At dead of night, in my worn cloak I wrapped  
My babe, and with a silken token which  
He gave me once, I veiled her face;—in her  
Unclasping hand I placed the faded rose  
He plucked for me the day he kissed me first.  
Ah, that first kiss! Had it but been withheld,  
My child and life of sin might not have been!

Alone, along the ways where we so oft  
Had walked together in the days when love  
Was all in all, I bore her 'neath the cold,  
Unpitying stars. On, through the silent woods,—  
O'er paths we trod the day my virtue died—  
Deep-freighted with the pine-land's fragrant breath,  
Alone I trod;—pall-bearer of my dead!

And there, alone, in that fair, fateful cave,  
Whilst midnight-mists enwrap in moist embrace,  
I buried her,—my little, nameless babe.  
With tender care I pressed about that form  
The cold, damp mold,—grim sister to the dead.  
With mosses fresh, I carpeted the grave.  
I spread them soft and smooth above her, as  
I used to spread the little counterpane

The while she, smiling, slept upon her couch.  
Oh, it was hard to lay the little corpse  
Within the grave, and know none mourned but me!  
Beside my babe I buried my dead joy.  
I knew that all was over then, and, with  
A sense of blankness, fell to earth. Around,  
Sad pine trees sighed in pity,—wanton winds  
Wailed weird, wild monodies,—a night bird called  
From out the dark in mournful monotone,—  
Black, broken clouds obscured the faint starlight.  
Between pale, distant Peace and woeful me,  
My babe—transfigured and enthroned—looked with  
Beseeching eyes, and them alone I saw.

*Dear, tender, treasured babe, if ought divine  
E'er came to earth, to comfort and to bless,  
'Twas thy sweet self. To feel that thou wert mine,  
Aroused me from my grief and deep distress,  
And made my heart o'erflow with thankfulness.*

*Sweet baby mine, with little cherub form,  
Soft, dimpled arms, and tender lily hands,  
Thou wert too frail to stand life's bitter storm,—  
So God hath summoned thee to brighter lands,  
Where flowers bloom forever on the strands.*

. . . . .

*Yes, He knew best; He took my babe away  
To dwell with Him,—a spotless, snow-white dove;*

---

*Oh, how I prayed that He would kindly stay  
The hand of Death; but now I know my love  
Has spanned the dark unknown to her above.*

*Yes, from that home in heaven, far away,  
She holds my heart with loving tendrils fast;—  
So shall it be at break of judgment day;  
When all my weary, wasted life is passed,  
Those cords of love shall guide me home at last.*

Then from a mother's flood of untold grief  
My reason vanished, as the sunlight leaves  
The hills,—as darkness gathers after light.

## XII

LONG after, I awoke in solitude,  
And held communion with myself and Death.  
With nothing left to live for, why not die?  
Why not myself blot out old Time—false Time,  
So fraught with failures dire, and boldly launch  
Into Eternity? Mayhap the forms  
And facts of the Beyond would prove more kind  
And just. With fascination strange and strong,  
I contemplated suicide and death.

As thus I lay, and faced the awful thought,  
A calm but sudden change possessed me then.  
My flesh forgot to creep as heretofore;  
For now the monster seemed a willing friend,  
As true and sweet as Charity should be.  
The fleshless hands, outstretched, were soft and  
warm;  
The ugly mask was dropped; when lo! the face  
Smiled on me with a tranquil glow of peace.  
Not far, I heard the rippling river glide

Adown its willowy banks, and thought the sound  
Was like the pleasing laugh of infancy.  
But die, I could not; for my hot blood leaped,  
And with indignant clamor swelled my veins,  
And roused within my heart rich songs of life;  
Nature and instinct joined in strong revolt,  
Until I closed my heart against the call  
Of that soft, wooing stream, and turned again  
To live, since only life were possible.  
Then I resolved to conquer Life and Fate.

. . . . .  
Now, saved from self, my next concern was how  
I best might save myself from mad despair,  
And ever-haunting memory of disgrace.

## XIII

FAIR type of progress, Hope, with wings out-  
spread,

Standing, one foot upon the sea and one  
Upon the land,—as the Apocalypse  
Portrays God's messenger,—thou beckonest me  
To leap upon my feet and climb aloft,  
Up, up the steep—the mount of God—and stand  
Above the plane of common things, and place  
In Him, the Giver of all good, my trust.

Thus Hope doth glorify this vale of life,  
As flowers beautify the meadow-land.

Moved by the good Samaritan's long-famed  
Example, as portrayed in Holy Writ,  
I sought to turn my wasting energies  
Toward frail humanity's relief; for, oh,  
The many opportunities! And grand  
The pleasures of the task!



With willing hands  
I dulled the sense of pain; with gentle words,  
Disarmed the force of sorrow; and through these  
Angelic offices, experienced sweet,  
New joy of living. So, with patient, rare,  
And dauntless hope I fought alone the fierce,  
Hot battles for the poor against their worst  
And constant enemy—grim poverty;  
I interposed my life between the sick  
And their destroyer—pestilence. For good,  
And leave to live, I wrought this work. And well  
I strove with needed helpfulness. How bright  
The gleam it threw athwart my grief! Ah, sweet  
It is to bind a broken soul! Aye, sweet  
It is to do the things one ought! God, that  
This lesson came to me too late!

Life now  
Grew tolerate; the keenness of remorse  
Was deadened by the joy of doing right.  
The little sacrifices which I made  
To brighten others' lives,—to heal their woes,—  
Brought soothing peace to my torn, bleeding heart.  
By such sweet ministries I hoped to gain  
Full pardon for the error of my youth;  
And by repentance and a righteous life,  
I sought from Him above forgiveness for  
My sins.

None know the full import of life  
Until they measure it by sacrifice.  
Seek not reward in gold or gratitude;  
'Tis found alone in consciousness of right.  
All find a high uplift who imitate  
The Christ.

'Tis said, "The heart grows richer that  
Its lot is poor." If this be true, then, sure,  
My selfless service should enrich, uplift,  
Redeem.

In vain, alas! howe'er so pure  
Our motive be, our deeds, they ever stand  
Between us and each course, bright sword of flame.  
My high resolve, a vision proved as frail  
As when in desert dun the traveler sees,  
Far through the tremulous air, tall groves of palms  
Encircling pools of shimmering blessedness,—  
Pale phantasy of sight,—a fair mirage!  
Society, which might have helped me, sneered  
In scorn, and only sought to crush all pure  
Intent. Nay, viewed me as a harlot,—imp  
Of hell. The church, whose duty 'tis to seek  
And nurture such, looked on askance, as if  
I were polluted, social carrion;  
And then, regardless of all motives and  
A conscientious, consecrated work,

Suspicious grew, and, last, abandoned me  
Completely. Aye, resultless were my deeds,  
As wicked men's, who fret the patient earth  
That gives them sustenance. Unjust! Unjust!  
'Tis thus warm hopes are changed to chill despair;  
'Tis thus that heaven's gates are barred to those  
Whose souls, perhaps, are not elected lost.  
Where is the blame? Not mine, but theirs; aye  
theirs  
For all that follows, and—for much before!

'Tis hard to pardon, easy to condemn!  
Society which judges, simply hears  
The worst, condemns, and straightway executes.  
'Tis easier far to render judgment so;  
Investigation wearies,—only tends  
To mystify, confuse; and thus confounds,  
Delays, or hinders all amendment here.  
A certain beast-force, undiscerning, blind,  
Rules and compels the world, and calls itself  
Conventionality; while men kneel down—  
But women most—before the Oracle,  
And whine and beg till they obtain the card—  
The gilded passport—with this Golden Rule,  
“Conceal thy sins, and be thou one of us.”  
We read how He, who yet will judge us all,  
Wrote idly with His finger on the sand,  
As though he heard not the accusing Jews,

With eager malice, cursing one who fell:  
Read how He lifted up Himself at last,  
Then spake some words at which they quickly fled;  
Then He, the sinless One among them all,  
Turned to the penitent and spake the words  
That few have spoken since, or learned to speak,—  
“Neither do I condemn thee: go in peace.”

Just God in loving mercy, erring ones  
Forgives: not so humanity; its laws  
Annul his gracious judgments, and reverse  
Christ's holy teachings, and with foul reproach  
They loud exclaim, “The fallen shall not rise.”  
And “they”—oh, who are “they?” The caddish  
crowd

Who sin far more than that frail woman who  
Would seek release from her sad sin; who'd wash  
The stain away from soul with her heart's blood;  
Who longs for death—the only open way  
To peace for fallen woman's troubled soul!  
They vaunt a prestige none but God can claim.  
If, in the vision Nature mirrors, they  
Could see aright, they would behold their own  
Reflection grimly, truly shadowed forth.

Unlearning is more tedious than to learn.  
And irksome 'tis to uproot trees long set,  
Both strong with sturdy growth, and rooted deep.

.

When late time comes for planting of the truth,  
We must replot in after years the field  
Of life we tilled so joyously in youth.  
Thoughts that take root the soonest in the soul  
Are oft but tares that cumber long the ground,  
And long the gardener, Reason, toils in vain,  
Yet finds the soil unfitted for the growth  
Of aught save worthless, superstitious weeds.

Why should it be my doom thus to endure?  
Humanity could well have been more kind.  
Why not have judged me as I wished and willed,  
And not by act beyond control? Why not  
Have weighed the motives which surround the  
                  wrongs  
Committed, rather than with glee to curse  
The doer, weak and frail?

Vain hope that led  
Me then to know this truth: no pardon comes  
Unless 'tis bought with gold! I tried to heal  
The Past, but failed for need of aid. Thus rare  
And negligent is human charity!

## XIV

THEN came misfortune as a flood;—came full  
And fast, as tears course down the face of  
grief.

Recurring troubles eddied round about  
Like straws upon the whirlpool's seething edge.

Aye, sorrows multiply as wingéd hours  
That flit to fasten on eternity.

I could not front such fateful, fearful odds!  
'Twas sympathy, not sermons, that I craved.  
I could not stand alone. What woman can?  
'Tis my belief, she needs, when once her course  
Leads wayward and astray—in lieu of words  
That bitterly upbraid and keenly cut  
With cruel, cold rebuke—a tender glance;  
Words soft as music of the sea; and full,  
Strong sympathy which wells from loving hearts.  
Supported thus, she can withstand life's hard,  
Insistent woes and sad catastrophes.

None wholly lose the innocence of youth;  
E'en shells retain the murmur of the sea,  
And roses, crushed, the fragrance they possess.

The blows and buffets of the world have taught  
Too late this added truth: I learned  
That one false step is ne'er retrieved; and this:  
Joy grows not in the soil that breeds remorse,  
Nor thrives beneath the dew of hopeless tears.

Then, weary, worn and wretched, from the world,  
Unkind and cold, I turned to solitude,  
There to escape o'erwhelming weight of woe;  
But when alone with my drear thoughts, they, too,  
Whipped me with scorpion whip and knotted lash,  
And grew entangled and distraught! O God,  
What pain, what torture pangs of conscience are!  
Far keener than the taunt and scorn of men!  
My night had come ere noon! I longed for rest.  
Forgetfulness were Mercy's greatest boon;  
Oblivion, Fate's most kind, indulgent gift;—  
For what allurements could entice my soul  
Away from its companion, Misery?

## XV

ONE ray of hope remained;—but that involved  
Humility,—meant sacrifice of pride.

To supplicate the man who wronged me, was  
The hardest task of all. Yet this was done!  
I wrote him once;—each separate word I penned  
Was a caress; each phrase, a fervent prayer.

I wrote him of my heart's distress; how drear  
To live with hope and love unsatisfied;  
How dread to die unmourned. Then, pleading,  
claimed

The needed home and happiness which he  
Alone could give; urged him, with tear-wet words,  
And by the memory of our vanished joys,  
To let not my dear dream of love dissolve;  
But rescue, shelter, and retrieve from death—  
Or what were worse—the mother of his child.  
I prayed for disenthralment from my woes;  
For freedom from the dross of sin and shame!  
And then I waited as the lost might wait



Outside the gate of heaven, harkening there  
For angel voices saying, "Come." And thus  
The weary days dragged on;—and he? He met  
My prayer with silence!

One sweet, tender word  
Would have unbarred the golden gates of bliss,—  
A bliss than heaven's joy more rapturous far,—  
And let such floods of light fall on my soul  
As would have served to guide my faltering steps  
From this drear path whose end meant awful doom.  
But silence stifled peace and hope and love  
Now rose that hideous monster, Hate, and cried  
Revenge! My shame intensified my mood.  
Oh, how I hated him! Aye, hated as  
Those only hate who have too deeply loved;  
For Love can not with dark Suspicion dwell.  
Ah, how I cursed him then! And such as he,  
For their alluring wiles wound, purposely,  
About frail innocence to tempt and wrong.  
I think the fluent fiends that nest below,  
And murmur away, must have been surprised  
To hear themselves so savagely outdone.  
Had I not reason for my swelling hate?  
I chanced my all upon his love,—and lost;  
And then was left to bear the shame alone,  
Betrayed, despised, rejected, and condemned;—  
Whilst he in cultured circles moved—a man!

Neglected, I,—like solitary shrub,  
That, high upon the barren mountain side,  
Apart from all its kind, stands bent and dwarfed,  
Its branches broken, victim of the storm.  
What helpless doom—to wander o'er life's way  
Alone till sabled Death companion me!  
I sank aweary with this endless wrong—  
This sullen, surging sea of strife and pain!

I did not know what now I understand;—  
The storm that only bends the oak, will rend  
The fragile tendrils of the clinging vine,  
And hurl it, torn and tangled, to the earth.

As one can see reflected in a stream,  
The arching, amber sky; the richest tints  
Of foliage; faint, trembling gleams of light;  
And flashes of rich fire that form a play  
Of color only such as hath the rare  
And changing opal, queen of all the gems;—  
And as another from the farther bank,  
Can see but murky blackness,—so, now, 'tis  
With me. From thorn-cursed bank whereon I stand,  
The farther shore is draped in gloom! A wraith  
Of what I saw with eyes of innocence;  
For then all things were dipped in living dyes  
And decked in rose and gold. Oh, how our views  
Are changed by circumstance and time!

## XVI

THE frowning Shadows deepened, and the light  
Of Hope died out, and Faith unclasped her  
hand

To leave me groping in the thickening gloom,  
With poor bruised brain, perplexed, confused, and  
dull;—

It seemed that I must surely go insane!  
For I remembered in the years gone by,  
When my young heart by sin was yet unsoiled,  
Ere I had learned to recognize and know  
What furies track and torture human lives,  
That once I saw—a sight to freeze the blood—  
A woman 'wildered with insanity!  
Her incoherent speech, her mad, wild eyes,—  
That Gorgon-glare—which well might chill to stone  
The gazer unprepared—my after-nights  
To torment turned with dreadful, haunting dreams;  
And to my soul it is a terror still.  
In this wild mood I little cared for life,  
But yearned to keep my reason. How I shrank  
From thoughts of going mad—insane! Insane!

“Great God!” I cried, “take hope,—take life,—take  
all—

But do not leave me of my mind bereft!”

But fevered cares caused me to brood upon  
Their fearful cost. One sinful deed disturbs

The whole of life, e’en as a pebble tossed

On placid sea, dispels the imaged sky:

From my one fault a demon sprang that wrecked

My peace of mind. At night, when all the world

Found rest in healthful sleep, my couch withheld

The balm. Oft, oft I left my troubled bed,

And used, as devotees their rosaries

Enumerate, to count my losses o’er.

What had I lost! What sacrifices made!

Dispelled—all radiant illusions; quenched—

Enthusiasm’s flames; destroyed—my plans

And possibilities; dissolved—my hopes

And aspirations; lost—my virtue and

My hope of heaven! Then, goaded by a sense

Of my great loss—peace, honor, happiness,

Love, wifehood, home, and heaven—my brain grew  
dazed,

And feverish.

Insane! Insane! In turns

I rave and plead—my intellect and heart

At variance. Like combatants they fight,

Each striving for the mastery. When Heart

Prevails, my love then brings him near and throws



*"Oft, oft I left my troubled bed,  
And used, as devotees their rosaries  
Enumerate, to count my losses o'er."*



Around his image splendor like the sun's!  
In joy I clasp him in my arms; soft words  
Of tenderness fall from my lips; hot tears  
Stream from my eyes that make my pillow wet.  
He seems so beautiful, so good, so grand—  
Not Phidias' Apollo is more fair,  
Nor God himself surpasses him in love,  
And attributes of nobleness, supreme!  
Then Brain advances with Plutonic might,  
And Heart is battered from control! It sinks!  
Not e'en Medusa with her serpent hairs,—  
Their forked tongues protruding, hissing hate,—  
Is so intent as Brain to ruin all!  
Ah! then I rave and rage,—gone, gone stark mad,—  
Like one possessed of devils. I resolve  
Revenge on him—a woman's deep revenge.

. . . . .

O sister fair, what hopeless hope was all  
That then was left! Unseemly my complaint,  
And inconsistent! Who hath not some grief,  
Which, if 'twere known, might far exceed mine own?  
Ah, none are free from bonds and fetters strong  
That link them captive,—ofttimes slaves—the whole  
Of their brief span of life,—to earth's drear dust!  
'Twas ever thus with countless throngs who came  
Before; 'twill be thus ever with the crowds  
That shall in all the ages follow them.

## XVII

I LEFT my dead among the scented pines;—  
My mother's tomb o'er which the marble  
gleamed,  
My baby's grave, a little, nameless mound;  
And all the hopes and loves that I had lost;—  
And resolutely set my face to seek  
The distant city by the ocean's marge;  
For it was widely rumored, there he dwelt  
In ease and splendid opulence; and there  
Would I my vengeful purpose execute.

No shielding hand was raised, no warning voice  
Was heard. I was about to "dash my foot  
Against a stone," yet from the guarding sky  
No angel hastened. Nothing intervened.  
I seemed uncertain of firm footing now  
E'en as a traveler on a crater's edge.  
I was a wild waif rushing swift to hell!

I thought of God. To Him I'd prayed through all  
My happy years; at mother's knee I lisped



---

The prayer she taught me never to forget;  
At my own bedside when a woman grown,  
With clear, calm voice, by conscience justified,  
I prayed the prayer Christ taught this wicked  
world:—

“Into temptation, Father, lead us not;  
Deliver us from evil, e'en in thought.”  
My young life was an offering unto Him,  
Far purer than the blood of sacrifice.  
And yet all seemed to be of no avail,  
Since evil purposes enthralled my will.  
Oh, such despair—despair like shoreless sea!

## XVIII

WHILST thus I felt my isolation,—yea,  
Believed none cared to stay my further fall,—  
My youthful lover, whom I knew before  
I met the man whose life absorbed mine own,  
Came with his messages of love and life.  
Thus he of all proved bravely true to me.  
This youth, by native honesty induced,  
In simple, candid words, his love declared,  
And urged me with the fervor of his soul  
To join with him in wedded life; to share  
With him his distant home and ample wealth.  
It came to me like tender, pleading voice  
From some lost world;—from that lost world of my  
Far youth; my distant, priceless innocence!  
His words of truth and trust, hot-welded firm  
By simple eloquence,—the thread of love  
He spun from golden strands of living faith—  
From my base purpose almost turned my thoughts.  
The burthen of his plea has shaped itself  
Into a song—a song my heart loves oft  
To sing:—

*There's a grave in the mountains that I have kept, dear;  
O'er the mound the sweet columbine drapes its rich bloom;—  
'Tis the grave of your child, Gracia; you should be near:  
If you come, we together shall lift the dark gloom.*

*There's a home in the mountains that I have now, dear;  
And the birds sing around it as sweet as of yore;—  
'Tis the home of your youth, Gracia; shed not a tear:  
If you come, we together shall love evermore.*

*There's a truth in the mountains that I have found, dear;  
In their silences, often it crowds on my soul;—  
'Tis the love of our God, Gracia; you shall not fear:  
If you come, we together shall reach the true goal.*

In tears and pain I heard his eager plea.  
As arrow found a lodgment in the oak,  
So his brave, honest words reached my poor heart.  
My soul was full of longing, full of love,  
And full of praise, and yet my heart was dead.  
I closed the gate of Hope the second time  
And turned again to wretchedness and woe.

## XIX

*Hot the fever and fierce the fight—*

*Love's endurance, love's delight:*

*Raging hot and consuming all—*

*Passion's play and passion's pall:*

. . . . .

**T**O live and have revenge—this was my wish.  
I had no way nor right by which I dared  
Confront him at his home, or in the high  
Society in which he moved,—and so  
I pondered much how I might meet with him.  
My reckless will resolved upon a course,  
Which, while it brought destruction on my head,  
Would also bring to him most dire remorse;—  
I chose the path that wicked women take.  
My dull despondency and drear despair,  
Together with the thought that it would crush  
His haughty heart and humble him the more  
To learn of my defilement and disgrace,  
Determined me to lead a life of shame!  
Instinctively I felt 'twas thus I could

Accomplish best my purpose. Quickly then  
My plans I formed; at once the wanton's guise  
My life assumed. I paused not lest in calm  
Review, the remnant of true womanhood  
Rebuke my chosen, reckless, sinful course;  
Some foresight of the ills, thick-shadowing  
My path, had saved me from this blighting life.  
I reckoned not upon the after-cost,  
But deep in wicked ways I plunged as straight  
As heavy plummets find the lower deep.  
To gain revenge, I gave my nights and days;  
Made sacrifice of self, complete and full;  
Formed compact with the very Prince of Wrong;  
Joined hands with any means however base,  
Or any evil thing however low,  
That might enable me to punish him,—  
To punish him who wrought this fearful wrong.  
And more I strove; for hate is twin to crime:—  
I prayed that I might skilled become in ways  
Of baleful wickedness; might know the false  
For subtle use; might wreath my face in smiles  
Of luring sorcery; might arm my tongue  
With all suggestive words and double phrase.  
I caught the Lorelei's enchanting song,  
And her seductive, graceful, languorous pose,  
Thus swiftly riotous had I become  
In passion's dizzying and damning whirl.  
And thus I strove till charm of courtesan

Was mine,—and all that witchery of grace  
Which lures but to betray to sin and death!

In learning these vile arts, I quickly found  
Most rare facilities. I dwelt within  
The house of her whose steps take hold on hell,—  
Whose chambers are the dwelling-place of death.

'Twas not the fascination of the place  
Which bound, but my fixed purpose, ever new  
And fiercely strong; although it was, indeed,  
A palace fit to throne a nation's King,  
Where taste and skill had wrought from fancy, fair,  
Such grace and beauty as would lull the mind  
Away from care to sweet forgetfulness.  
'Twas beautiful as any fairy's dream;  
'Twas grand as fabled Neptune's ocean home.  
A filmy sheen of woven gold and lace  
As frail as gossamer, the windows draped,  
Which dulled the rays to wooing dimness rare;  
Gold-flashing fans, propelled by force unseen,  
A coolness gave as fresh as midnight's breath;  
The perfumed air in gentlest motion set,  
Would wanton with the loosened hair and soft,  
Fine lace that scarce would hide the lovely form;  
The dazzling chandeliers' effulgent glow  
Of richest tinted lights, reflected here  
From polished surfaces, and there absorbed

By softest folds of Oriental weaves,  
Shed golden glory-showers over all;  
From quaintest Tuscan vases, deftly wrought,  
The creamy petals of magnolia buds  
Were bursting into flower, whose fragrance filled  
The air with incense like the dreamy East;  
Pulsating songs, linked with sweet, silver strains  
Of harp, scarce-heard, set ardent thoughts aflame.  
Within those wide, luxurious parlors were  
Divans and lounges of most tempting ease;  
Whilst lazy Eastern hammocks occupied  
Half-hidden alcoves where, amid the soft  
And silken cushions, women,—fair as false—  
Lay Circe-like, and beckoned with a smile,—  
Displayed voluptuous charms enticingly,  
To stir the amorous blood of frequenters.  
Each separate room seemed furnished for a prince,  
With queens to minister. Mohammed might  
Have looked therein and dreamed another dream  
Of beauty richer than his houri-heaven,—  
A dream of reckless, ravishing delight!  
A sensuous dream of wild abandonment!

Here Pleasure marked the hours his very own;  
Here Prince of Darkness held his court unchecked!  
There shone and flashed about the visitor  
To that abode temptation, diamond-starred;  
All forms of beauty that bewitch to kill;

Perverted intellects to foul the mind;  
Allurements, subtle,—sure to damn the soul!

But few behold and scorn the tempting snare:  
To scorn, aye, better still, ne'er to behold,  
Is wisdom, virtue, peace, and righteous life.

United with the wish to please, rare grace  
And beauty, make the woman master; make  
The man the woman's ever-ready slave.  
Ah, beauty—woman's chiefest, mightiest charm!  
Not Lethe's fabled waters, nor that strange  
And subtle force that lurks in lotus blooms  
And poppy buds, make men forget so soon  
As when fair woman weaves her mystic spell!

And men came flocking there to throw away  
Both wealth and name; to thrust aside their homes  
Like garments long outworn and comfortless.  
Thus women use their witching powers to soothe  
And lull their victims to soft, magic trance,  
From out whose sure awakening there comes  
A fall, abrupt, like that from heaven to hell.  
The night was one mad revel till the dawn—  
The dawn, a prologue to the coming night.  
The gods, wild Eros and bold Bacchus, each  
In turn, held his intense, despotic sway,  
And women carnavaled in wickedness!



Men, women, all, are servile slaves to style.  
This truth I realized, and chose with care  
Rich silks whose every rustle sang sweet songs  
Of languorous rest beyond the distant seas;  
Embroidered ribbon—ornaments superb—  
With glossy tints, and antique open work;  
Old lace from Eastern looms, within whose web  
Lay hid a charm which held men bound to vice.  
'Tis pity beauty must contribute thus  
To sin! But so it is; for who denies  
That certain perfumes haunt, becloud the mind;  
And passages of passionate music stir  
The blood to surging, dangerous rioting?

Most graciously they welcomed comers there,  
And soft and sweet their wiles and wooing ways;  
But with their every charming look, combined  
Intoxically some hurtful lure.  
Fair forms and graceful, flitted fairy-like,  
Clad dimly, as the moon in silver mist.  
They danced and sang and stirred the reveller's blood  
To riot, and benumbed respect and shame.  
The red wine, sparkling in the crystal cup,  
Pressed to men's lips by warm, caressing hands,  
Might tempt a saint to lose his soul, forsooth.

Strong men and feeble, foolish men and great,  
Beset the house, but shunned each other's gaze,

And stole away through dark, deserted streets,  
To hate themselves with abject soul for days;  
But still returned, as eager as before,  
To plunge into illicit revelry.

Few thought or cared to know where these things  
    led,  
Still seeking pleasure, blind to coming doom;  
And few who gathered there had open eyes,  
And none saw through the flimsy show of joy  
To its red consequence and rude result,—  
Disease and death, wrecked lives and ruined homes.  
But woman loses more, is more disgraced.  
Man is the baser metal, and the stains  
And soilure scarcely serve to tarnish him,—  
For he is nearer earth, and earthlier.  
But woman, jostled from her sacred place—  
Her purity and innocence once marred—  
Must fall so far; and spots on her fine gold  
Look grosser still, and vastly uglier.  
Her throne forsaken once is not regained;  
Aye, more; she knows not any pause in sin!

Let truth be told. I know of deeds of ill  
That make the background of that fevered life  
To reek with horror, which, when thought upon,  
Would strike the very soul with mortal dread;  
For they were black with passion, red with blood.

Ah, there were found unspoken depths of vice!  
Sometimes one vanished from her 'customed place;—  
Inquiry learned that she was cast aside—  
Was absent under ban of living death—  
Her place was filled, and nothing more was said.  
At early morn, once passing through the hall,  
I slipped, and falling, bathed these hands in blood!  
A tragic tale! Some lover had in fierce  
And jealous rage, his mistress foully slain!  
And there she lay with wide, unseeing eyes,—  
A sight to make eyes sightless evermore!  
I've heard with fear a baby's feeble wail;  
One never heard that same child's wail again!  
My icy pulses shudder when I think  
What morsel fed the sewer rats that night.  
A gray-haired pair once came and searched the house,  
And found their idolized and only child,  
Perverse and proud, but beautiful as sin.  
They made such fervor of appeal to her,  
Such passionate display of love and shame  
As might have won a savage from his tribe.  
She only stamped her idle foot, and said  
She would not leave her merry loves and dress,  
Nor ever live their humdrum life again;  
Bade them begone, and think of her no more.  
They turned away in agony of grief  
More keen than that above a new-made grave!  
Poor fool! When sinful passion had consumed

The newer joys and buoyant hopes of youth's  
Bright years, she learned so to despise herself,  
And so to hate her soul-corroding life,  
That with a mad, despairing leap, she found,  
Within the mud and slime and sluggish ooze  
At bottom of the river, rest at last.  
And one, far gone in drink and jealousy,  
But cunning as a hungry savage beast,  
Tied fast her lover's hands behind his back,—  
He sleeping, heavy with excessive wine,—  
Then, with her silken kerchief round his neck,  
With cruel, noiseless skill, she strangled him!  
We found her in the closing hours next day,  
Kissing with frantic grief the purple lips,  
And weeping on his bloated face,—insane!

Such hellish lives are like blood-sucking bats;—  
Both fatten only during gloom of night!

The woe and waste of war are far less dread  
And devastating than the blight that falls  
With certain force in Passion's fearful work,—  
'Tis as calamitous as wreck of worlds.  
Aye, Pleasure dances on the grave of Peace,  
And builds the tomb of Innocence and Love!

Through all this maddening tempest of delights,—  
This hideous whirlpool of iniquity,—  
I kept my purpose steadfast as a star;

For Love was fiercely battled back by Hate,  
And red Revenge usurped complete control.  
I was the gayest siren of them all;  
The wildest reveler with broadest jest;  
A jeweled beauty with the sweetest smile.  
My name and fame were bandied 'bout the streets.  
Men said I could have robbed Old Egypt's queen  
Of Antony, or Helen-like, o'erthrown  
Another Troy. Intense and burning hate,  
And my desire to lure him to my side  
That I might vengeance wreak as I had planned,  
So wrought upon my powers of soul and sense,  
And so intensified the flame of life,  
That I became as charming as a fiend,  
And lured my victims to the whirlpool's depths.  
Impatience, whetting keenly my revenge,  
Led me to think my new-begotten charms  
Would bring within my power the man whom I  
Had sworn to punish for his perfidy.

I think the pine trees of my native hills  
Must nightly croon a mystic monody—  
An answering echo of my heart's lone cry—  
Because of my intent; more sorrowful,  
More kindly, thus, is Nature than is man.  
The burden of their dirge,—my life and love  
And loss,—must sound as sorrowful as some  
Regretful wail wrung from Æolian harps,

The while the wild wind, crashing through their  
chords,  
Capricious seems and fickle as is Chance.

Dear sister, thou hast read in Grecian myths  
(And thy fair soul with anguish wast awrack),  
Of how the lovely maid, Andromeda,  
Enchained, alone, to gloomy sea-wall rock,  
Exposed as prey to monster insensate,  
Whose angry lashings churned the sea to foam,  
Whose hideous, loathsome form and gloating eyes  
Stormed at her soul until it sank in fear,—  
By Perseus was released; of how this Knight  
In girth of gold and shield asheen, with strong  
Swift-flashing blade, fell on the hellish brute,  
And champion proved, and brave deliverer!  
If moved by sufferings of Andromeda,  
What must thou feel for wasted womanhood  
Forever fettered to dark, dreadful shame?  
What deep reproach upon our Christian age  
To know that woman,—frail, sweet woman, chained  
To sin and vice,—must trail her wretchedness  
Alway, with none to champion! True, Christ  
In pity freed the Mary Magdalene;  
But who of all His followers hath dared  
To interpose for one incarnadined?  
The myth is mask of woe; this fact is woe  
Itself!

## XX

Whilst other eyes are Eastward turned—  
And high—to view the Star of Bethlehem,—  
Fair prophecy of World's resplendent Light,—  
I ever sit and gaze a-west and dream;—  
Gaze Westward toward my distant sundown home!

Oft homeward ranged my thoughts. 'Twas this that  
scourged  
My soul! The quiet country, peaceful, pure,  
That rose to meet, in hills and billows, morn's  
Caressing sun; contented laborers,  
At eager tasks that, sanctioned both by man  
And conscience, furnish heaven-like rest and peace;  
Gay children, care-free, who, intent upon  
Their romping sports, are joyous from their own  
Unconscious innocence; my early friend,  
Whose constant heart held him my lover still  
Through clouded years, though no encouragement  
Was granted him in such unequal change;—  
All, all reminded me of my lost years,

And set reproach upon my wicked life.  
'Twas then conviction fell like lightning's bolt!  
Would God that tears could wash the blackness out!

O angel aim, and angel grace of youth!

I sometimes sang a song I learned when pain,  
And grief, and loss to me were idle words;  
And how I loved the lines—sweet memory!—  
Perchance prophetic of the days to be—  
Yet as I tried to sing I only moaned:

*Once more to be a happy girl,  
With bounding foot and flying curl,  
At romp among the hay;  
Like bubbles where the waters purl,  
Or mists that round the hilltops furl,  
As bright and pure as they.*

*To feel my mother's hand so light  
Upon my head, and in her sight  
To rest secure from harms;  
To dream it all anew at night,  
And in the morn find fresh delight,  
And nestle in her arms.*

*The sunshine fell like golden spray,  
And every month to me was May,*



*No shadow in my sky;  
Nor did the hours of any day  
Drag slowly: fast they fled away  
As swift as swallows fly.*

*O stormy day, at morn so fair,  
O gathered clouds and darkened air,  
Cheerless, and cold, and gray!  
Outcast, alone, with none to care,  
To touch my hand, my grief to share,  
Or bid my steps delay.*

When thoughts of girlhood crowded on my mind,  
I wept for my fond, faithful steed on which  
I used to ride in rhythmic beat across  
Far-reaching plains, where open prairie rose  
And fell as though a sea, upon whose great  
Receptive bosom billows hastened fast  
In fealty to the shores, where, breaking, they  
Would find a rest eternal as the past;  
I longed to hear the rush of summer storm,  
To measured, rumbling roll of thunder-peal,  
Like hurried tread of mighty mail-clad hosts;  
I yearned for my wide circling mountain-peaks,  
Whose dizzy heads it seemed to me might prop  
The planet-peopled skies; I longed for wild,  
Familiar mountain brooks that swiftly dashed  
Amidst huge, rugged boulders and lodged logs

As troubled souls are tossed and swirled about  
When on their intricate and dangerous way  
Toward cold eternity; I craved the deep  
Recesses of the woods where silences  
Impress as though they were the dwelling-place  
Of God alone; I sighed for seas of wide  
Expanse—low foot-hills and low, level plains,  
Where browns prevail—the dull, deep Van Dyke  
shades

Of brown, and pale, still, ashen grays of Death;  
Where, from the level wastes around, we learn,  
As mountains, crumbling, lose their eminence,  
And blending in one common lot, blot out  
All past distinction of wide valleys, deep  
Ravines, or towering mountain-peaks,—so all,—  
The strong, the great—by Death are leveled low  
Despite their clamorous boast.

Oh, once again

To roam o'er silver-fretted rocks; to sport  
On gold-besprinkled sands; to pluck the gay,  
Wild blooms that beckon one from every side  
To sweet companionship! Fair flowers, and wild!  
Sweet primrose, and the nodding columbine  
Bedecked, festooned earth's throbbing, heaving  
breast;  
The dandelions—golden medals—lay,  
Profusely scattered, 'mongst the new-grown green;

Pale violets—as broken bits of sky—  
At random mottled patches of the ground;  
The golden-rod,—ablaze upon dull hills,—  
Outvied the noonday sun; gay buttercups—  
Like frail, lit candles—gleamed from out the grass;  
And black-eyed daisies starred the glens, as bright  
The Pleiades begem the cold night skies.  
Fair, fragrant blooms of every hue and form  
Completely carpeted the woodland glades  
With richer figurings than tapestries  
Of Ispahan. Oh, but to be a child,  
And live again 'mid scenes where summer airs  
Are nightly cooled by snows on mountain peaks,  
And odors freshly spread by cedar trees  
That mantle every glade, and tamarack  
That stretching high and far away, becomes  
A sea of sea-green growth; where free, glad birds  
Whose flight—but why should I thus have and hold  
Such wild, vain thoughts? They were but plummet-  
line  
Wherewith to sound the depths of my sad fall!

How great is loss of virtue! Virtue is  
The fairest, frailest flower ever found  
In the bouquet of human attributes.  
An amaranth of spotless purity,  
When once it fades, it never blooms again.  
To what great depths of woe fall those who lose

This rare and priceless bloom! What peace of mind  
And joy of life go out when its bright tint  
And fragrant perfume waste away! 'Tis then  
That savage Ruin holds one firmly thrall'd!

And are these tears that dim mine eyes? Away!  
I thought my fount of feeling naught could touch!

## XXI

ONE day, when mad with misery, I joined  
The jostling throngs upon the busy streets,  
To lose myself within that surging sea  
Of utter loneliness, found nowhere save  
In those vast crowds that throng the thoroughfares  
And marts of teeming cities. Seething tides  
Of restless human kind swept on, and I  
With them, with wishes wayward as the winds.  
As thus I moved, before me in the street,  
I saw a rich and costly equipage.  
Upon the cushioned seat, in easy pose,  
He lounged—the man I sought!—for whom I had  
Assumed the very livery of hell  
That I might be equipped to seek him out,  
And wreck his happiness as he had mine!  
At sight of him, a sudden, surging train  
Of half-forgotten memories returned,—  
Caused quickened blood to press about my heart,  
And would have softened it, had not the sight  
Of her, his fair, proud wife, and one sweet child,

Beside him there,—where my poor babe and I  
Of right had been,—suppressed my mood, and fixed  
My purpose staunch, and firmer than before.  
Cursed be the hour I saw them there! And cursed  
Be they! I could not bear the bliss of her  
Who rode beside him there. Was she to have  
The same hot passion which without restraint  
He gave to me, and swore should always be  
My portion? Fierce the thought inflamed my heart  
With jealous rage! My hot blood upward whirled  
And seethed my brain. I was as one possessed.  
I heard their carriage wheels grind down the sands  
As ruthlessly as Fate o'errides our hopes.  
And as his eyes in wandering o'er the crowd,  
Arrested were, at seeing in its midst  
The one whom years before he had betrayed,  
The startled look and searching gaze he gave  
Were answer to my wrought-up heart. Revenge,  
So long delayed, so fully sought, must fall  
Both sure and soon; for he would seek me out.

Good Sister, is it strange that, driven wild  
By slight and insult, I should seek revenge  
As surest mode to stay the raging fires  
That fiercely burned within my aching breast?

That day I purchased of a hunchbacked Jew,  
With harlot gold (few question whence gold comes),



*"That day I purchased of a hunchbacked Jew  
A knife of such rare temper, such rich hilt,  
It might have hung in some old Sultan's belt."*





A knife of such rare temper, such rich hilt,  
It might have hung in some old Sultan's belt;  
And with my name inscribed thereon, I swore  
By all the pain and sorrow he had caused,  
That I would hide it to the jeweled guard  
In his false heart who ruined me! And while  
I thus my vengeance vowed, some who were near  
O'erheard my foolish, fierce resolve, and watched  
To see if I my awful oath would keep.

## XXII

THAT night I stood within my room alone,  
Before the glass, with all my jewels on,  
In toilette perfect, radiant, complete;  
And wondered at the face reflected there.  
Grief had not touched nor marred it with a trace;  
'Twas fair as when he looked upon it first,  
Care had not wrinkled it nor blanched my hair,  
So marvelous is youth and healthful blood.  
But hate and scorn, contempt, and proud disdain  
O'ercast it like a cloud, as when the shade  
Of stone-built wall falls on a lily bed.  
I knew whose hand had drawn that shadow there,  
And thought of him with such fierce, vigorous hate—  
With such hot-whirling promptings for revenge—  
As might scarce brook restraint.

The dagger lay  
In easy reach,—its jeweled hilt alive  
With serpent's eyes. I clasped it lovingly;  
I pressed its angry point. 'Twas keen as hate!



*"That night I stood within my room alone,  
Before the glass, with all my jewels on,  
In toilette perfect, radiant, complete."*



Would he were here, I thought. My nerves, steel-  
tense,

My brain, impassionate and venom-steeped,  
And my hot heart—I turned and looked—when lo!  
Before me stood my hunter of the hills,  
My demi-god, my lover, and my king!

Returning late, from ball or banquet-board,  
In passing where I dwelt, he sought me out

He only said, "Come, Gracia; come to me!"  
Within his eyes the old compelling look,  
And in his voice the old imperious tone;—  
No change save that his one-time raven locks  
Were flecked with snowy flakes that never melt.

I thought my love was crushed and dead. I thought  
The vampire, Hate, had robbed my heart of all  
Its youthful tenderness; it seemed to me  
The hideous thing had drained from life that part  
Which makes existence bearable. Not so.  
I felt a sudden shock. As surging flood,  
The old love, masterful, retook my soul,  
And hate went out as darkness flies from light—  
As mist recedes before the stroke of sun,  
Or as the livid lightning's flash dies down.  
How sweet, when first love reasserts itself!  
The low, sad cry my poor heart uttered then  
Thrilled to the stars, and shook their mystery.

The first love of a woman is her best.  
It never wholly dies. She may relove,  
And prove the truest, faithfulest of wives,  
Nor ever cause the heart which trusts in her  
One jealous fear or one distrustful pang:—  
For after-love is wiser, soberer;  
Is led by reason; guided and restrained  
By selfish interest; its hasty flame  
By prudence cooled, and quite conventional.  
But oh, the first wild leaping of the heart  
That knows no reason, and that seeks for none!  
That loves because—because—well, tell me why  
The lilies bloom, birds sing, or roses blow,  
Or why the waters haste to meet the sea.

## XXIII

WITH tender grace as native to the man  
As fragrance to the rose, he seated me.  
“Attend, my love,” he said, “nor blame till  
then.

’Twas heaven, indeed, to share with you that bliss  
Of love amid the sighing, whispering pines.  
But every dream must end—the clear, blue sky  
Must be o’ercast with tempest-driven clouds;—  
So our rose-tinted dream has turned to gray  
And blackening shadow. Sorrow, Gracia, great,  
Increasing sorrow, you have had; but cold  
Remorse; consuming, haunting, fell remorse  
Is now my share—is now my recompense.  
Oh, listen, then, and judge what blame is mine,  
And know why I did not return, nor yet  
Respond to your impassioned message sent.

“My father’s partner was a scheming knave,  
And had obtained by villainy and fraud  
Control of all the moneys of the firm.

He had one daughter whom his sordid heart  
Loved next to gold. That I should marry her,  
And thus unite the houses into one,  
Was his desire. For this he toiled and planned  
And lied and stole, until he found himself  
Well qualified to force his base demands.  
I left your side in answer to the call  
My father sent to me with urgent haste.  
He was much bowed and broken by the shock,  
Yet told me all, nor sought to screen himself  
For over-faith in one not worthy trust;  
And then he laid his trembling hands in mine,  
Beseeching me for sonship's sake to save  
His gray hairs from the clutch of poverty,  
And interpose between disgrace and him.  
'Twas love or duty;—which one should I choose?  
For love meant death to him; and duty, death  
To us! 'Twas hard to take my hand away  
From Love's warm, clinging clasp, and touch the  
palm  
Of Duty, cold and stern. But Duty won!  
At what a price! Gods, what a fearful price!

“When I averted for my father's sake  
The wreck that threatened him,—albeit I  
Received a death wound in the bitter fight,—  
My thoughts returned to you. How could I best  
Make some amends, and partly counteract



The cruel stroke of adverse Fate? Atone,—  
Console and save—this was my eager hope.

“And so, my love, I searched for you where we  
Had met; sought you amid your Western hills.  
The search was quite as faithful and as vain,  
As that long quest King Arthur made to find  
The golden Holy Grail. From trysting-place  
To trysting-place I wandered, wrapt, enthralled.  
By very contact with the loving past!  
And as I trod the sacred grounds, you seemed  
In truth—the miracle was memory’s own—  
To be a living spirit by my side!  
Oh, restful, gracious, precious memory;—  
Joy’s crown of joy, remembering happier days!

“Again I frequented that gladsome spot,—  
The intimate cave,—where we were lost in love!  
The pulsing sun went down; the waning moon  
Barred its pale rays behind the branching trees  
That fringed the higher ranges toward the West;  
The steadfast stars—the sentinels of the night—  
Looked on me from the sky. The past returned:  
I then recalled how oft together we  
Had scaled the sunlit steeps; how gladly we  
Had fathomed depths of shadowed canyons till,  
Remote from man, we were our natural selves.  
Mad mountain streams made haunting melody;

Far-trembling winds, erstwhile a tempest, now  
Grown tame, deep-freighted with sweet fragrance  
from

The pine trees' balsamed boughs, delayed to lure  
And to intoxicate; the bright, clear sky  
Gold-filled, immaculate, that arched and reached  
Away into infinity of space,  
Embraced us there upon that lone hill-side,  
And whispered, 'Love, for love is best,—is all!'  
The drowsy colors on the mountain slopes,  
The searching fragrances from woodland nooks,  
Seemed all of purple hue, and violet scent,—  
Sure signs the senses are impassionate!  
'Twas thus the essences of nature fanned  
The flame that fused our beings into one!  
Against these intertwined environments  
We could no longer hold our weakened wills;—  
We loved, for we could do no less! And such  
A love! From gentle friendship, satisfied  
With kindly act, and smile, and touch of hands,  
It grew, nay, sprang to passion, uncontrolled  
Unsatisfied unless it ranged unchecked,  
Until the fury of its fervor changed  
To restful indolence—intensity  
Becoming calm tranquillity! And thus  
We, two, together swayed from bliss to pain;  
Together sought and found the ecstasy  
Of love's far, utmost madness that uplifts

To starry sphere of sweet, ungraspable  
Delights! On our entranced, o'er-sweetened souls  
The sleeping forest cast its mystic spell!  
Then love's soft ravishments possessed our hearts  
And forced us, trembling, into warm embrace!  
And so for days such nectarous draughts we drank!  
A new, exalting glory tinged our sky!  
And so we loved; our willing, swooning souls  
Beguiled by Nature's all-approving smiles.

"But when weird hauntings of my wasted years—  
Of all my blighted after-life—trooped through  
My wrought-up mind as I relived our past,  
Contrition smote my heart till its keen pain  
Forced signs of agony to my cold brow.  
Oh, cruel, poignant, lashing memory,  
Yea, 'Sorrow's crown of sorrow, memory  
Of happier days!'

"The view-point, therein lies  
The wide and wavering difference!

"Sweet love,  
'Twas thus I sought for you where we had met  
But you had fled far from the hills and me!"

My life's best love awoke once more as strong  
As in the old, dear days. I was re-charmed

By tender intonations, earnest ways,  
The subtle witchery of his deep voice,  
And words fraught with apparent truth, so that  
Both trust and credence seemed again restored.  
Yes, sister, let me think of him as he  
Appeared when that strong love-wave swelled about  
My breaking heart: it soothes me now, as then.

Didst ever look straight at the shining sun,  
And then away? And dost thou not recall  
The dark, black spots which stay before thine eyes  
When thou hast turned? Well, so it was with me.  
He was my sun, and oh, the spots were big  
And black when I was forced to turn from him!  
One cannot long look straight upon the sun!

With earnest, fervid words once more he spake:  
"Sweet one, you must not, shall not doubt me now.  
What I have said is wholly true. Love guards  
That which it loves. And so would I. But Fate  
Has intervened!

"O Fate, thou art my sure  
And stern undoer! Thou hast strewn my long,  
Drear pathway thick with circumstances dire!  
And these have blotted out all hope; have come  
Between fair love and me; have left my life  
In throes of grief and anguish and remorse.

Aye, from Fate's fatal distaff flows a web  
Whose warp of woes and woof of sin enmesh,  
With no escape from its entanglement.

“The stealthy force of deeply hidden laws  
Delivers strokes so shrewdly sure and swift  
That none can parry them, howe'er they try;  
Yea, lifts or lays its burdens without heed.  
What we call 'circumstance beyond control,'  
Is but a special move, as Fate plays out  
Our game upon the checker-board of life.  
One drop of erring blood determines oft  
Life's greatest issues, as one tiny stone  
Beside its source directs the river's flow;  
An accident may oft-times interpose  
Between the best of hopes and purposes.  
Within the weakest and the strongest man  
A strange, invincible, unerring force  
O'errules and guides him to his destined place,  
As surely as the ocean wins the stream.  
For who is not a child of Chance? All are  
As autumn leaves—frail playthings of the winds!

“Our paths divergent grow; oh, widely so;—  
Nor is there aught we dare assume but this  
I now propose to you: As Lancelot  
And Guinevere indulged delight in famed  
King Arthur's time, as Faust and Marguerite

Sealed soul to soul, let us in secret love;  
Concealing our relations, boldly launch  
In passion's barque, upon the sea of joy,  
And float, forgetful of our cares, amid  
Fair isles, spice-odorous, whose fragrance turns  
The blood to wine; past coral-strands whose waves,  
As lazily they beat the low-browed shores,  
Sing songs which lull the soul to sleep and dreams.  
On such an ideal island we shall dwell  
In some deep vale, sequestered, girt about  
By tropic trees whose leaf-crowned branches break  
Broad sheets of sunlight into showers that slant  
Athwart wood-glooms with arrow-shafts of light,  
And splash and blotch the ground with russet gold,  
And freshen flowers to lovelier, livelier hues;—  
Aye, there, where limpid streams o'er crystal beds  
Meander murmurously and slow; where grows  
The yellow lotus flower, whose broad leaves pave  
The soft, still waters of the sedgy lakes,  
Like fair, white, flower-flecked paths of Paradise;  
Where climb the jasmine vines, whose pure, rich  
    buds  
Exude a fragrant, drowsy spell that drowns  
The senses in intoxicating bliss;  
Where fringing ferns the cool retreats adorn;—  
And woods are redolent with harmony  
Divine;—there we shall find a pleasure-place,  
More fair by far than any famed or sung

In India's far clime. There we may lose  
Ourselves in drowsy languishment;—yes, there  
In secret, amorous life, together live,  
With Love our law, and joy our only aim,—  
A flowered summer, our fair heritage!"

Now oft at night when memory reaches back  
Among the varied epochs of my life,  
His passionate words and fervent plea are cast  
In strong relief, as living picture framed  
By flames of fire; they burn themselves into  
My soul—a song; a soft siren song,  
That haunts and holds my mind, despite my will!

*Where the lotus and jasmine breathe sweets through thy dreams;  
Where voluptuous nature entices and sways thee;  
I will build thee a palace, where rhythmical streams  
Shall re-echo my heart with "I love thee; I love thee!"  
Oh come, come with me!*

*I will make for my Eve a new Eden once more,  
That shall throb with the glow of its passionate hours;  
Where the murmuring sea sings of love to the shore:  
There to live, there to mate like the birds and the flowers!  
Oh come, come with me!*

*Where the warm, languid breezes in soft, amorous song  
Woo the mind from all thought save the one of love-living;*

*Where our hearts and our souls to ourselves shall belong;  
Love forever untiring—receiving and giving;*

*Oh come, come with me!*

*Like two glorious rivers that merge into one,*

*We shall live, and tell ever love's beautiful story;*

*Like two birds that are lost in the light of the sun,*

*We shall lose ourselves, dear, in love's sweetness and glory!*

*Oh come, come with me!*

*Let us drink to repletion, my sweet, for all time,*

*Of delight and wild joy and hot passion's endeavor;*

*It shall be my sole duty thy beauties sublime*

*To admire and adore for their royal, rare splendor;*

*Oh come, come with me!*

*We shall clasp, oh so close that our forms shall entwine*

*In a rapturous embrace that is trance-like,—delirious;*

*Thy lithe limbs, snowy breasts, ardent lips fierce as wine,*

*Fill my mind with a madness, intense and mysterious!*

*Oh come, come with me!*

*There is naught in mad Hell nor sweet Heaven akin*

*To the rapture aroused by thy ravishing kisses;*

*To the warmth and the glow of thy soft, satin skin;*

*To the thrill of thy form, charged with love's eager blisses;—*

*Oh come, come with me!*

*Oh, a wonderful song such a sweet life shall be, dear,*

*With the music of spheres in full unison rolling;*



*Aye, a song of rich gladness, sung free and so clear  
Nor Eternity's anthems were half so consoling!  
Oh come, come with me!*



The danger-demon, Anger. Nothing could  
Assuage the storm that beat my breast to wrath.  
In name of love, had he not offered vice?  
The thought but added fuel to my hate;  
Intensified my will. Enraged, I thus  
Made answer:—

“Shame upon your perjured soul!  
Aye, shame!

“You were my God! I worshipped you  
As angels do their great Creator! Yet  
You blighted my young life like stifling breath  
Of simoom’s blast! But for deceit, I might  
Be happy as the happiest in all  
Our land. Had you been true and manly as  
Those Knights in days of chivalry,—days when  
Men held a woman’s honor sacred,—I  
Might yet be worthy confidence and love.

“Nay, love from love accepts naught that is base;  
Nor can love give love aught but what is pure.

“Once I was crowned with pristine purity—  
As virtuous as Vestal maid;—but now  
The scarlet letter burns upon my breast;  
My name is stricken from fair honor’s roll;  
My simple faith in holy things is gone;

My lofty purpose and resolves are lost;  
My soul's sweet sentiment—love's hungering—  
Is dead; my love-life has been strangled, killed!  
There is no crime like murder of a soul!

“My hopes, the last sustaining rays, are wavering;  
They flit like will-o'-wisps athwart the night;  
They fade like glowworms on the breaking crest.  
My world is empty and unpromising;  
For now the sun and song of life are gone!  
And you, you wrought the awful, total change  
That plunged me deep into this gulf of doom!

“You bade me trust you unto death. Alas!  
Thus trusting, through that very trust, I fell;  
I fell to earth weak, quivering, alone!  
And here I lie like drift-wood on the stream.  
You held out roses for my taking then,—  
Nor did I realize the thorns they hid,  
Until I clasped and pressed them to my heart!  
I cast my soul down at your feet; too late!  
How slight the love for which I wrecked  
My life; how bleak the burdened earth for which  
I bartered heaven's glad domain! But Hope  
Sows much that Love can never reap. Oh, would  
That one might love or not at his own will!  
With such controlling power, all pain would be  
Eliminated, and fair Love with his

Attendant joys and pleasures, high enthroned.  
I knew not then your fascinating speech  
Was soft-spun flattery, designed to hold  
My Confidence a captive bound, the while  
Its further use, stiletto-like, wrought death,  
Both swift and sure, to Virtue's sacred life!  
Your kisses poisoned, and your words betrayed!

“You let me bear and bury our poor babe  
Alone! You were not there to give it glad  
And loving greeting when it came; not there  
To drop a tear upon its lonely grave,  
Although I longed for your companionship,  
And hoped from you the promised name of wife,—  
For your full love and firm fidelity.  
All through my grief, reproach, abandonment,  
And dreadful, deathlike life, you were as cold  
And cruel as the hand of Fate itself,—  
As stolid as bronzed image of Distress!  
You left me with my grief and pain, which tore  
My heart from home and hope, and left me reft  
Of all save keenest pangs of dire remorse.  
Nay; when I prayed for strength your love could  
    give,  
You answered me with silence. Oh, what turned  
Your loving heart to stone? What changed that  
    love  
You swore exceeded love of life? Great God!

How could such love desert its idol thus?  
The feeble lamb may bleat its way to heart  
Of hardened herdsman out upon the vast  
And rolling graze-lands of my wild, wide West;  
But my sad, plaintive cry died on the air;  
You triumphed;—strangled, stifled both our souls!  
And spurned me then, as though I were a dull  
And trodden clod! Such pitiless disdain!  
Oh, must my hungering heart regret alway?

“Why tell you now how I have lived; of how  
In shame with shame I deeper sank; of how  
I starved in garrets cold, in basements damp;  
Of how they scorned and shunned me everywhere  
Save in this gilded home of infamy?  
Such life doth maim for vast eternity;  
Such life were worse than nightmare of foul hell!

“You have been held in greater consequence,  
As though I sinned alone! Shame on the false  
And coward fear that forced you from my side,  
And fixed the blame upon the frailer one!  
Should you not expiate your wrong in woe  
As I? Should my poor, hounded soul be scourged  
Alone? A curse upon the Fates that kept  
You from restoring me to that pure life,  
When life was love, and love a dream divine!

“Why should you strive to show an innocence  
Beyond belief? Why should you make me now  
This vicious, base proposal? Oh, why do  
You substitute for virtue, vice,—and seek  
To cheat our consciences and all the world,  
And plunge in dizzied recklessness? I hate  
You for your cold hypocrisy! Attempt  
To comprehend this hidden, baleful thing—  
A fallen woman's woe,—and you will learn  
How great the crime committed in love's name;  
How great your sin of blasting perfidy!

“You cast me out—alone! My father cast  
Me out—alone! Society, the church,—  
They cast me out—alone! And now, behold!  
I'm what you all would have me—deep in guilt,  
And bold in shame! Mayhap you wove a web  
Of sin from tangled threads of innocence!  
Mayhap I'm what you made me by neglect!  
Oh, why, why should my lover and my sire,  
The very ones I loved the most and best,  
The very ones who should have shielded, saved,—  
Denounce me now, and plunge my trembling soul  
Into perdition's fathomless abyss?  
Why should the Christian be the stumbling-stone  
Of Virtue and of Faith?

“Until pure love  
And true religion exercise their strength

By saving grace, these two great principles  
Are nothing more than elements of Fate—  
A blindfold Fate,—that deals with mirth or moan  
In most haphazard form. When good defends  
A wrong, then good is wrong, but more to blame.

“O perjured soul, why didst thou break thy vow?”



## XXV

HIS deep distress proved how my words had hurt.  
My heart now changed. As fiercest fire full  
soon

Consumes its substance wholly, so my quick,  
Hot passion swiftly spent itself in its  
Own deep intensity. Again I felt  
I could forgive him all. Uncertain there  
Before him now I stood;—my heart, unchecked;  
My soul, confusion—wild.

Then low he spake:—  
“No more, I pray! Your words, each one a tongue  
Of livid, licking flame, have burned my poor  
And sorrowed heart to ashes, gray and dead!  
I swear 'twas not in malice that I struck  
You down. But there you've lain where low you  
fell

With head beneath the shelterless, cold wing  
Of night! O God! My punishment must be  
Damnation for thus blasting your young life!

“But know ’twas not from malice or design;—  
’Twas Love, a thing unkind, persuaded me.

“My all of life a failure seems and vain.  
Deep have I studied, but, alas! what have  
I learned? And high as heaven have I aspired,—  
To what attained? Have loved,—but what the end,  
Save hopeless chaos? Disillusioned now  
Am I, and great is my disquietude.  
The heights of heavenly bliss, I now believe,  
Can never equal pleasures of the hills,  
Where we were free to roam and love at will;—  
And hell itself can never hold such pain,  
As when those whom I love believe me pure  
And worthy trust, the while I live a lie!

“Life crowds most bitter things upon us all;  
And true, though sad, the hope that binds each one  
To right is frail as filament of floss.

“Oh, that I had been true to you, and thus  
Had saved our lives from this exhaustive blight!  
In place of this sad wreck, we might have spent  
Our years in deep devotedness of love,  
And thus have rounded out our attributes  
For peace and joy and noble usefulness!  
Together striving, miracles we might  
Have wrought: we might have healed the broken  
heart;

Aroused dead love in man for man; suppressed  
The sweep of stalking grief; stilled strife to calm  
Repose; and pierced with light life's night of gloom!  
Such deeds had dignified, aye, glorified!  
Had Fate not foiled our fair lives' unity,  
The score completed, would have swelled a song!

“Why should I murmur or complain? What hap  
If be these years misspent? For one sweet year  
Were you not mine, all mine, and all to me?  
In that there's recompense enough; all else  
May be of blackest sin, but cannot blot  
The memory of that Eden, long ago!

“Thy name, sweet one, hath been a mystic spell  
That bound me to that simple, sacred Past!  
Long, weary years I've wept for you; but, oh,  
Why do I find you here? I would have found  
Your grave among the hills with far less grief.  
And you, the mother of a babe—my babe—  
Our child! Would God we, too, were sleeping in  
That sylvan grot—gate to both heaven and hell;—  
Were buried with our babe in endless rest,  
Our triune souls one in Oblivion,  
Or all before our God for judgment just.

“What cursed Fate has led you thus upon  
Dark ruin's further track? What—yet I would

Not ask. O Gracia, lost to me for aye,  
I found you in yon distant, peaceful home,  
An angel fresh from Paradise; I find  
You in this den of vice, an angel still—  
But joined to hell—polluted, poisoned, foul;  
A rose no longer regal in the sun,  
But draggled with the soil and slime of sin.  
The thought of this,—this dreadful, dead-black  
crime—

Puts out the radiant light of love's fair face,  
And hangs the veil of shame and pity there.  
My soul abhors but never can forget.  
And yet my heart still clings to memories  
Of other days;—to what you used to be  
When you were free from scarlet-dye of shame:  
E'en now I would you were my fancy's queen.  
I love this mockery of her I wooed!  
But, oh, 'tis madness when I love yet loathe;  
'Tis awful when what should can never be;  
When what we wish most wars with what we have!

“Now, Gracia, fair,—though fallen deep in sin,—  
Farewell. For love and loss of you, I die,—  
For love and loss of you, and from remorse  
Of my false life. For it was false to you;  
'Twas false unto my wife, and to my child;  
To my best fortune and my manhood, false!  
'Tis such self-loathing prompts one to destroy

The thread of his existence, and to leave  
A world where pain and tears predominate.”

He rose and paced the floor with nervous tread,—  
With such a look of anguish and despair  
As makes the gazer turn away in fear.  
His visage, with its weird and livid lines,  
Seemed like a vision of some tortured soul  
Which, racked by accusation and remorse  
And uncontrolled emotions, had gone mad.

Alarmed at his strange state of mind, and awed  
At sight of passions that would chase athwart  
His face, I strove to stay the storm I felt  
Must break. But naught that I could say assuaged.  
With all the mists now rolled away, I saw  
The father of my child,—the Hero-King  
Of my heart's mystery,—in agony  
Of mind; his soul with conscience warring, fierce.

Now, sister, I must tell you that which proved  
My greatest woe. Oh, how can I proceed?

A certain softening charm to change his mood,  
I then remembered that I still possessed!  
It was a tiny, silken strand of hair,  
Much like his own, which I had saved that night  
From out the grave-dust of that hidden cave.

I went to bring it, and, returning, saw—  
Oh, horror, horror! On the couch he lay  
With eyes wild-wide, with pallid, frightful face!  
Above his heart gleamed bright my dagger's hilt,  
Reflected redly in the bloody stream.

Whilst I was absent for our baby's tress,  
Possessed of talismanic power, this man,  
Whose anguished mind was wrought beyond control,  
With fearful force and steady, wondrous nerve,  
Had driven deep, and swiftly sure, the keen  
And savage blade into his tortured heart,  
And by the self-inflicted wound set free  
Contending fears, and severed soul from clay!

How can I tell you more? That chilling sound  
The icy slide of steel gave forth, as swift  
The knife pierced breast and heart of him I loved,  
Congealed my blood, and chilled my very soul.  
Fear, pallid fear fell on me then.

O God,  
What ghastly, freezing fear! 'Twas full of cold  
And frightful fascinations.

Paralyzed  
And terror-stricken at the dreadful sight,  
I could not speak nor stir! My senses throbbed!

The room grew dark! I was both stunned and  
crushed!

My piercing shriek of horror woke the house!

The gathering inmates, pitying, beheld

His tragic death and my spent agony.

Then from the strain so fierce and great, my  
strength,—

Long sorely tried,—deserted me, and left

Me lying near the form of him I loved,

In blest unconsciousness!

## XXVI

When I awoke,  
'Twas in a new, strange place. The whitened walls;  
The dreary line of beds; the stagnant air  
Impregnate and malodorous with scent  
Of antiseptic drugs; white-hooded forms,  
As sunlight, silent, gliding here and there;  
My own dull sense and utter helplessness,  
Apprised me of my sad environments.  
Another yet was there whose youthful dreams  
Lay shattered in my fall—that noble soul,  
Who, years before, had been my truest friend  
When all the world disowned, abandoned me;—  
Who knew no thought save never-ceasing love  
For me;—he, kneeling, bade me hope, and yield  
Him yet but chance to prove that love which brought  
Him there to seek me,—boon I could not grant.  
What reasoning can justify the fact,  
That those we illy treat are, oft-times, they  
Who lend devotion; whilst those whom we help  
The most, are most devoid of gratitude?  
Or who explain why what we have or may



Attain, is held in sad indifference?  
'Twas then they told me I was held by law,  
And charged with murder, wilful and designed;  
With all the weight of that rash vow I made,—  
O'erhanging, like the sword of Damocles,  
And ready with the slightest breath to break  
The thread-like strand of hope by which it swung,—  
Conviction surely waited health's return.

Bear with me, holy sister, yet a few  
Short moments; soon my piteous tale shall cease.  
Alas! What now remained to tell, or fear?  
They might as well have talked to senseless stone.  
The idle waves that beat about the base  
Of rugged cliffs are not more impotent  
Than grief and loss had then become to me.  
No love, no hate, no hope, no fear, no woe  
Could touch or thrill my broken heart again.  
Fate, like a rage-blind savage beast, might yet  
Inflict her blows,—she could not wound me more;  
Not more indifference and apathy  
The Sphinx's face still wears on Libyan sands  
Than then I felt for all the Future's plans;  
My feelings and my faculties were void:—  
All dormant, or all dead. Have you not seen  
The ocean's tide fling slimy monsters high  
Upon the sun-bleached sands to die, dissolve,  
And vanish? Time, my strong, swift ocean-tide,

Had toyed with my lost heart—for years I grasped  
At straw and floating wrack—but now that fierce  
White light, experience, reveals that sad  
And sickening thing—a soul, self-damned—flung far  
By wind and wave upon the shore of life,  
Without a hope;—atonement e'en denied!

The trial came, much like the one once held  
In Pilate's Hall of Judgment. None appeared  
To testify for me. The evidence  
Against me was quite flawless and complete.  
None knew my innocence except myself,  
And he who slept, my dagger in his heart,  
And that All-seeing One, Who holds the world  
Within the hollow of His hand; Who molds  
Our lives from out the clay of circumstance.

The trial-time drew near.—“Guilty as charged,”  
The jury found.—“For life,” the Judge decreed.  
This was the end.

. . . . .

With such dull mockery  
And farce of justice did the court adjourn.  
They lodged me in this cell,—my living tomb;  
Aye, this the fatal, dread finality!

Hereafter must I walk my bounds—these dull  
And narrow bounds—as tiger does its cage.

Let none accuse save those who war have waged  
 With dumb despair; whose lives prove life is vain.

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 . . . . .

This tale is finished,—my sad story told.  
 The barque which sailed away upon Life's sea  
 Is drifting helplessly along the sands  
 Of time. And yet, far in the distance, gleams  
 The harbor lights of heaven, and I see  
 Him standing with my baby in his arms,  
 His face aglow with that old love-light still.  
 And borne across the waters by the gale  
 I hear his voice repeating, "Gracia, come;  
 Come home and rest in peace forever more."

I beg of you say not that I bemoan  
 My fate; for now the wish he voiced, that we  
 May rest in peace, soon will be gratified;  
 And in that other world where human woes  
 And human frailties are unknown, we'll meet—  
 My love, my babe, and I:—and God, mayhap,  
 Will pardon, as the world has never done—  
 Or else oblivion will end my woe.  
 Yet tell my tale to others,—they may heed,  
 And guide their barques away from rocks and shoals;  
 And thus this bitter wail from heart, distressed,  
 May, quivering ages through, arrest, or ward  
 The awful, fatal consequence of sin,

And save despairing souls from that dread thing,—  
A sorrow,—universal, pitiless!

. . . . .  
. . . . .

Ye cold, grim prison walls, bedewed with tears,  
And charged with echoes of old convicts' groans,  
And ghastly with the spectres of old crimes,—  
More hideous than a madman's dream of fear,—  
Take me, and close me round until I die.  
Here must I wait in hateful solitude,  
Nor ever see the sun, or feel the breeze,  
Or smell the winning odors of the flowers,  
Or listen to the music of the birds,  
Or hear again the happy children laugh—  
Yet forced to live life's dreadful tragedy,  
Till my slow sorrow loosens all the ties,  
And liberates, despite of bolts and bars,  
Misfortune's child, whom all the world disowns!

. . . . .  
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Life doth not compensate its loss and pain;—  
Its blessings few; its crosses many, great.  
I am a wreck dropped by the ebbing tide;  
A broken lily, drooping on the stem;—  
Let Death now seal Life's hungry lips with rest.

Farewell, my graves; shadow and sun, farewell!



*"Ye cold, grim prison walls, bedewed with tears,  
Take me and close me round until I die."*















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